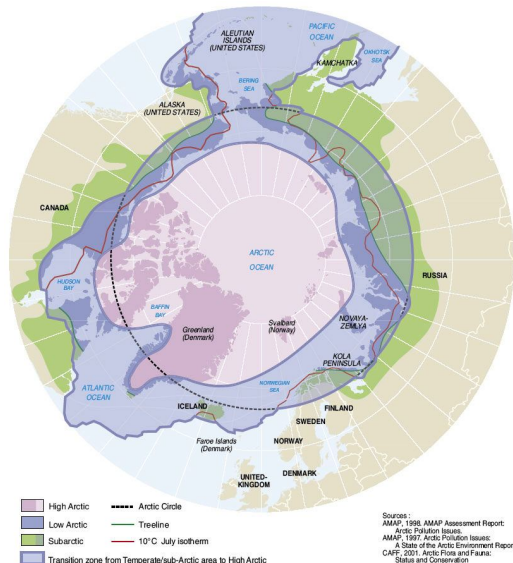


Europe's share of the Arctic Pie

I Brandon Cooper | } May 25, 2015 | v 11 | m Uncategorized



When the United States bought Alaska from the Russian Empire nobody could foresee the pending importance of the region. Now, not that it just turned out to be a Klondike, important as it might be, a most vital issue nowadays refers rather to sharing of the Arctic. Presently, the littoral Arctic Ocean states are viewed as potential owners of multimillion tons of hydrocarbons stored underneath the arctic ice. Due to global warming northern shipping lanes become accessible reducing delivery time by several days. But if the economic benefits of arctic shipping are something premature to discuss now, since the ocean stays covered with thick ice most part of the year, the extraction of hydrocarbons is a vital issue. According to the [U.S. Geological Survey](#), nearly one-quarter of the earth's undiscovered recoverable petroleum resources lay in the region.

By virtue of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the coastal nation has sole exploration rights over all natural resources within the exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles from its shoreline.

There are 5 such countries in the Arctic region: Denmark, Canada, Norway, Russia and the USA. Article 76 of the Convention stipulates that each of these countries can claim extension of this limit up to 350 nautical miles from its coast if it can provide scientific proof that the seabed is a natural extension

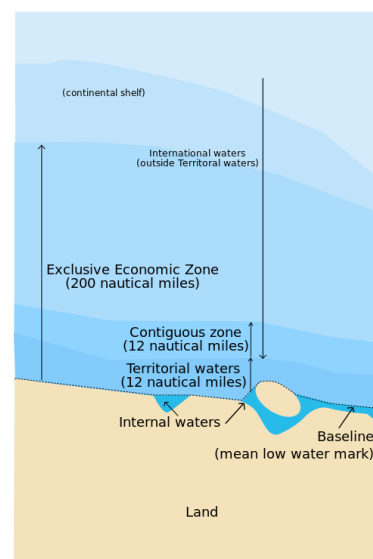
of its continental shelf. Up until now [requests for extension](#) of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean have been filed by Russia and Denmark, with Canada to follow them in the nearest future.

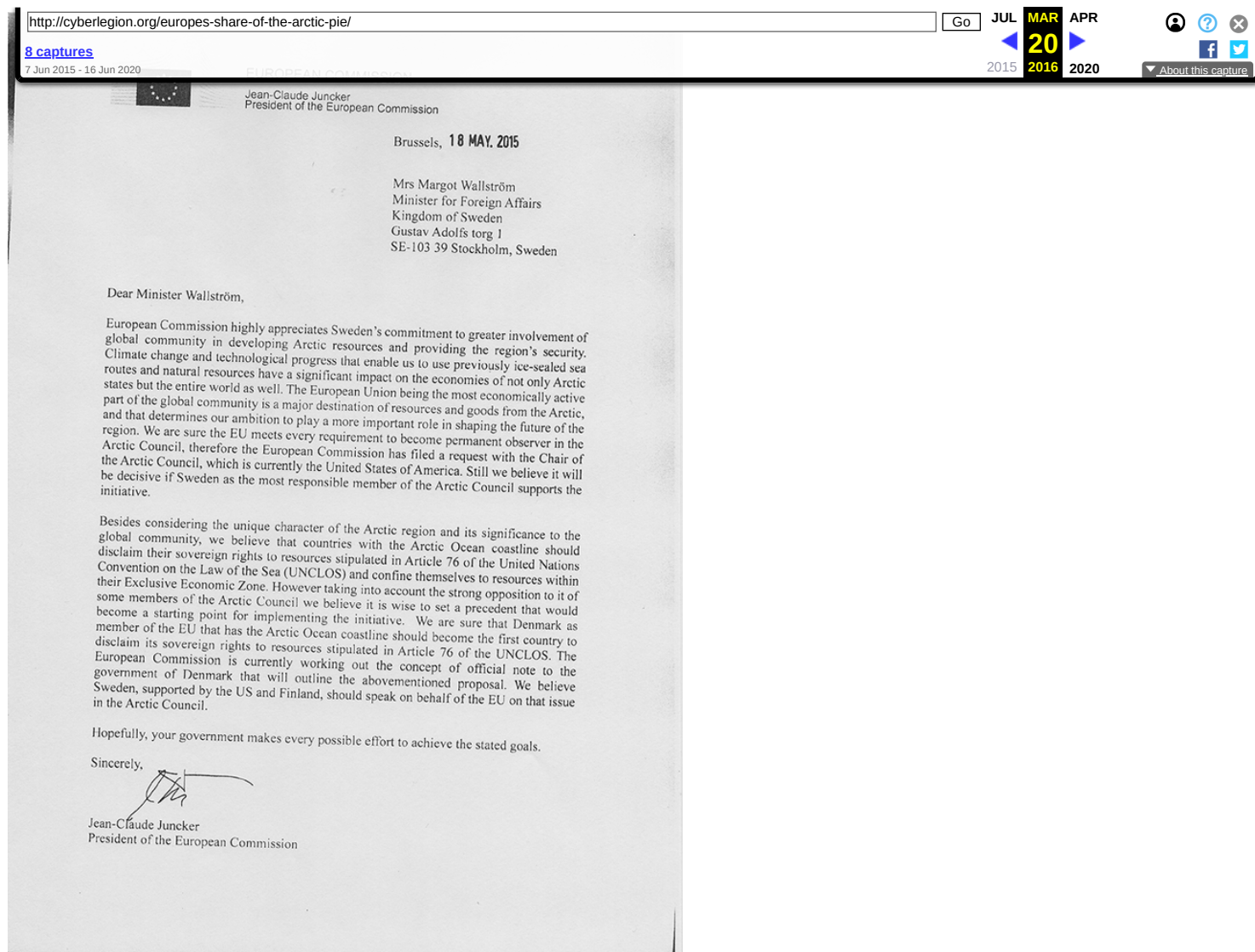
Naturally, the participants of this share-out strive to seize the biggest piece of the pie, which is actually a breeding ground for endless territorial disputes. Say, Canada, Denmark and Russia have been long at odds trying to prove that underwater Lomonosov Ridge is a part of their relevant continental shelves. The country able to prove it, will get a huge portion of the Arctic region stretching till the North Pole.

The USA, the EU and other parties involved insist that the [Northwest Passage](#) should stay under the international jurisdiction while Canada asserts it is located in its territorial waters. The US also disapproves of Russia's intention to see the [Northern Sea Route](#) as a national transport communication way. Canada and Denmark are involved in dispute over [Hans Island](#). Washington and Ottawa fail to come to an agreement on the maritime boundary in the resource-rich [Beaufort Sea](#).

Several international bodies regulate the tense situation in the region. Major of them is the [Arctic Council](#) comprising Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. International community is eager to be involved as well and several states have already received the [observer status](#): France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Great Britain, China, India, Italy, South Korea, Singapore, Japan.

Despite the previously failed attempts, the EU is also at pains to get the observer status. Its most weighty argument being that EU has three Arctic Council states amongst its members. The EU is also a major destination of resources and goods from the Arctic region. Thus, Brussels plans to increase its influence on the Arctic decision making. According to the [recent letter](#) of the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Margot Wallström, the EU has already filed a request with the Chair of the Arctic Council, the United States, and is now awaiting support in this issue from the Swedish representatives.





On top of that, the EU is set to exert pressure on the coastal Arctic states to force them into disclaiming their right to extension of the continental shelf as it is stipulated by Article 76 of the UNCLOS. Considering 'the strong opposition to it of some members of the Arctic Council', Brussels wants to press Denmark so that it could create a precedent and become the first country in the context to throw up substantial share of its national wealth. The EU is firmly set to get support of Sweden, the US and Finland.

However, bearing in mind all the economic gains Denmark may get in case its sovereign rights for the Arctic resources are extended we shouldn't expect Copenhagen to make that sacrifice just to satisfy political agenda of Brussels.

Nowadays the comprehensive exploration of the Arctic region depends on many factors. It is not enough to make scientific research and investments into infrastructure. Some common political concept containing tough rules and terms obligatory for all the parties involved must also be worked out. Unfortunately, we may only observe some initial steps in this direction at the moment. The future of the Arctic depends to a great extent on the clear-cut position of the countries and political consistency of such artificial international formations as the European Union.



@

← Previous post

Next post →

11 Comments

Pingback: [Europe's share of the Arctic Pie | joeshever](http://cyberlegion.org/europes-share-of-the-arctic-pie/)



Green

May 26, 2015 at 9:27 am

http://cyberlegion.org/europes-share-of-the-arctic-pie/ Go JUL MAR APR 20 2015 2016 2020 8 captures 7 Jun 2015 - 16 Jun 2020 About this capture

**CasperJ**

May 27, 2015 at 9:13 am

To all seeming Brussels has already forgotten the reason the EU was not granted observer status to the Arctic Council at Kiruna meeting in 2013. It happened because of the Brussels' politically intensive stance towards sealing and whaling and because of the European Parliament's politically unfeasible position, which suggested a comprehensive international treaty to govern the Arctic region on the basis of the Antarctic Treaty.

Thus, if the EU really strives for seeking a greater role in the Arctic, it should come to recognize that the Arctic states are the primary actors in the region while the EU should focus its growing engagement only on supporting their existing successful cooperation.

**Mona**

May 27, 2015 at 9:52 am

I'm just bursting with indignation! How come? President of the European Commission believes that 'countries with the Arctic Ocean coastline should disclaim their sovereign rights to (Arctic) resources stipulated in Article 76 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea' and Denmark, a EU member, is to set the precedent! I'm speechless!

Let's call a spade a spade. Denmark is being forced by Brussels to "willingly" abandon huge part of its national wealth!

Now I'll be least amazed if Denmark chooses to drop its EU membership, for if it bows to the will of Brussels it'll amount to crime against its own people and its would-be bright future.... Mass protests in Copenhagen and other Danish cities are quite predictable.

**Moony**

May 27, 2015 at 10:30 am

Who do we owe this stir actually?

We've already got most vital Ilulissat Declaration dating 2008 of 5 Arctic States (Denmark, Russia, the USA, Canada and Norway). All those countries stated there they see as obligatory for themselves the already improved international norms regulating the share-out of the Arctic Ocean and recognize lack of any need to work out any more international documents in this field. There are three more countries viewed as Arctic states 'course their territories are crossed by the Arctic Circle: Sweden, Finland and Iceland. Perhaps they'd love some bigger piece of the Arctic pie and this is the reason why they've joined that effort of Brussels to get more involved into Arctic issues and to reconsider some already fixed things. I mean Sweden is definitely making troubled waters by playing this game and the letter only proves the fact.

**Kris W.**

May 27, 2015 at 10:46 am

But why should Denmark "make that sacrifice, prejudicing its sovereign rights to the Arctic resources as it is stipulated by Article 76 of the UNCLOS"? To all seeming our "economic gains" really are keeping somebody in Brussels on the alert. What right at all has Brussels to force us advancing its crazy projects to the detriment of this country's interests? And imagine, it is only "initial steps in this direction"! What next?!

**HarryM**

May 27, 2015 at 12:55 pm

Well, obviously, the EU is intimately connected to the Arctic region through its Arctic States. But if Brussels wants to be accepted as a legitimate stakeholder by these states, it should adopt a more aware and conciliatory tone in its Arctic policy. It means that EU should toe the line where Arctic governance is built on existing multilateral frameworks (the UNCLOS, current Arctic Council and the International Maritime Organization (IMO)) instead of a certain new Arctic treaty, simultaneously respecting the sovereignty and national interests of Arctic states themselves.

**LittleHarry**

May 28, 2015 at 9:46 am

Brussels wants greater role in the Arctic region. Well, well.... Isn't it too late guys?

Brussels doesn't bother much to respect the sovereignty and national interests of the Arctic states themselves. Actually those were Canada and Russia who started large scale research and development of the region.

Needless to say, exploration effort in the Arctic went rather costly for those who were the first to start in the region. Btw they generously shared the scientific data with other countries, with the international community.... without being paid a cent.

Then other countries, now represented in the Arctic Council, joined them. At the moment the EU has three Arctic Council members in it and I guess officials in Brussels see it sufficient enough to claim greater EU involvement in the Arctic.... wella.... holding 13% of oil and 30% of gas undiscovered suppliers.

Judging by the above posted letter, Brussels hopes to ensure its bigger involvement by employing those countries as sort of its fifth column in the Arctic Council to shape its policy up to the EU liking.

**CavetanoB**

May 29, 2015 at 9:44 am

Reply to Kris W.:

http://cyberlegion.org/europes-share-of-the-arctic-pie/Go

JUL

MAR

APR

20

201520162020

About this capture

8 captures

7 Jun 2015 - 16 Jun 2020

beyond the normal 200-mile boundary. But the rest Arctic’s territory with natural resources, lied there, should be shared by all nations, including European ones either!

Pingback: [Wem kommt Arktis zu? | Politgraben](#)

Pingback: [Европейский кусок арктического пирога | INONEWS](#)